

**TOP MICROPOLITANS OF 2011**

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# A Dynasty of Deals



Niagara Bottling Company has built a \$45-million plant in Mooresville, N.C., and will employ 66 people at the 310,000-sq.-ft. (28,800-sq.-m.) manufacturing facility.

*Photo courtesy of Niagara Bottling Company and the Mooresville-South Iredell Economic Development Corp.*

## A decade of dominance culminates in another Top Micropolitan ranking for Statesville-Mooresville, N.C.

by **RON STARNER**

**F**rom the Blue Ridge Mountains to Brazil, companies from across the Western Hemisphere are descending upon North Carolina's Iredell County at a pace unprecedented in the modern history of America.

With 28 corporate facility projects in 2011, Statesville-Mooresville, N.C., secured more expansion deals than any other micropolitan area in the U.S. Wooster, Ohio, finished second with 21 projects, followed by Cullman, Ala., which had 20.

This marks the eighth time in the last 10 years that Statesville-Mooresville has earned the title of Top Micropolitan Area in the country. The U.S. Census Bureau defines a micropolitan area as a rural county whose largest city does not exceed a population of 50,000. The U.S. has a total of 576 micropolitan areas.

Adding to Statesville-Mooresville's dominance is the fact that since 1999, this small-town area has finished lower than second in the rankings only once.

No other metropolitan or micropolitan area in the nation even comes close to matching Iredell County's record of victories and top-two finishes in the annual project tally competition.

"The activity in the past year has been phenomenal," says Robert Carney, executive director of the Mooresville-South Iredell Economic Development Corp. (MSIEDC). "This community is successful in economic development because it has so many assets for business. We have logistics, access to three major Interstate highways, a beautiful lake, and public and private support. Our leaders recognize the importance of being an employment center rather than a bedroom community to other areas."

The proof is in the projects. In Mooresville, the largest announcement last year came from **Niagara Bottling Company**. The US\$45-million investment in the Mooresville Business Park creates 66 jobs and 310,000 sq. ft. (28,800 sq. m.) of new manufacturing space for the production of bottled water.

"That project was a shining example of what can be done here," says Carney. "They are the second-largest, private-label bottling company in the country, and they came in with the idea of purchasing existing facilities. We persuaded them to be open to the idea of a build-to-suit opportunity. We showed them how we could meet their timeline on producing a state-of-the-art facility for their operations. They were so pleased with the process that they now insist that all future plant locations be a build-to-suit facility."

### How Mooresville Won the Deal

Niagara conducted a wide-ranging search before selecting a 66-acre (27-hectare) site in Mooresville. "The company explored potential locations in Virginia, West Virginia, Maryland, New York, Ohio, South Carolina and other parts of North Carolina," says Derieth Sutton, economic development and government relations coordinator for Niagara. York, Cabarrus and Lincoln counties in North Carolina were part of the search.

"Of the many factors we look at, estimated annual operating costs and start-up costs are two of the most significant," Sutton says. "But as an American family-owned company, it is also critically important to us that we maintain our core values in each and every facility and are able to recruit great, hard-working people that believe in those same ideals."

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T7	New York	7
T7	South Carolina	7

Source: Conway Data, Inc.'s New Plant Database

Sutton notes that state and local incentives were "extremely important" to the deal. "While incentives do not make a bad location good, they absolutely have an impact on annual operating costs and start-up costs," she says. "So while we won't choose a site based purely on incentives, we can tell you that incentives often become an overriding factor once we get down to a list of three to five tremendous finalists. Niagara also considers the incentive process to determine whether or not all levels of government are synergized and working on the same page when it comes to our project."

Sutton says Niagara found that teamwork in Iredell County. "Both the MSIEDC and the Charlotte Regional Partnership were our primary points of contact and were essential in coordinating all of the moving parts of this project," she says. "We could not have made this decision nor been able to have comfort with the timeline for implementation for this project without the MSIEDC's ability to not only tell us, but show us that it could be done and done on time."

Sutton also cites the area's strong labor pool as a plus. The local work force gives Niagara "the ability to build a world-class team," she adds. "Family values, a strong work ethic and great attitudes" define the local work force.

Facility construction is largely complete, says Carney, noting that the new plant is expected to be fully operational in March.

The community reaps other benefits from this project too, he says. "We recently invested in our water infrastructure, and this new plant will generate about \$1 million a year in new revenue for Mooresville just from the sale of water. This one project will enable us to stabilize our community's water rates."

Mooresville pulls its water from Lake Norman along Interstate 77. "We have the largest land mass of water frontage in Mooresville and South Iredell County," Carney says of the lake that serves as a driver of tourism and hospitality business throughout the county.

Another driver is the motorsports industry. Mooresville serves as the hub for many NASCAR race teams, including **JR Motorsports** — the team of Dale Earnhardt Jr. and Danica Patrick — and **Kyle Busch Motorsports**.

"Kyle Busch Motorsports just announced a large sponsorship deal with Monster Energy Drink," Carney says. "Kyle and Kurt Busch will drive the entire Nationwide Tour as part of this deal."

**Lowe's Companies Inc.**, headquartered in Mooresville, continues to grow as well. "They hired 300 new employees at their corporate campus in 2011," says Carney. "They have consistently been expanding their operations. They have basically built out their campus, but they have plenty of space left to add workers. They expect to have up to 15,000 employees upon full occupancy."

## Statesville Goes Global With Projects

A short drive to the north in Statesville, the company expansion engine is revving up into high gear. The crown jewel came when Brazilian-owned **Providencia USA** announced a \$60-million expansion that adds 28 jobs and 90,000 sq. ft. (8,361 sq. m.).

Combined with Providencia's \$70-million nonwovens factory that opened in Statesville's West Industrial Park last February, the two phases represent the largest announced manufacturing investment in Statesville in 23 years.

"It certainly adds to the international presence in our community," says Mike Smith, executive director of the Greater Statesville Development Corp. (GSDC). "It is a great opportunity for our region. Charlotte has a direct flight to Rio and later this year we will have a direct flight to Sao Paulo."

Gene Konczal, general manager of Providencia USA, tells Site Selection that the "number one factor for success in Statesville is that there is a pool of talent for this industry in our area within a 50-mile [81-km.] radius. Several other nonwoven companies are here. You don't have to search for a long time or pay a lot of money to find experienced people."

Konczal says logistics is a key site consideration as well. "Charlotte Douglas International Airport being an international destination is a factor, because we are a Brazilian-owned company," he says. "Two major highways running through Statesville — Interstates 77 and 40 — are a major factor. The presence of a rail site was a huge factor. Our raw material is delivered on rail. Polypropylene comes in pellet form. And the cost of electricity here, when compared to some of the alternative areas we looked at in Georgia and Tennessee and South Carolina, was advantageous. We are a heavy electricity user. That may have even been a tipping factor."

Konczal explains that he looked at sites in Macon, Cordele and other locations in Georgia. "I found higher costs of electricity there," he says. "We are on City of Statesville electricity, and the rates are very competitive."

He also likes the fact that Iredell County ranks among the "five lowest counties in terms of tax rates out of 100 counties in North Carolina. The other four lowest-rate counties are all in very remote areas," he notes. "We are only 45 minutes from a major airport. That is an advantage for our business."

The general manager notes that Statesville is strategically located "midway between New York and Miami and situated well between east and west in this region. About 70 percent of the U.S. population lives east of the Mississippi River. Our customers are in the right geographic mix for this location."

Konczal adds that future expansions could be in the works. "This is only our second line. We could put in two more lines before any other site is looked at," he says. "Once you locate here, it is really hard to go someplace else. We are set up here for many years. We have a 43-acre [17-hectare] site. We are good for 10 to 12 years here with additional lines. Our total work force upon completion of the new expansion will be about 100 employees."

## Family Firm Serves Up Big Facility

Joining the Statesville expansion wave is North Carolina-based **Pate Dawson Company**, a food-service distributor that's investing \$9 million over three years to locate a new distribution facility in the Statesville Business Park on U.S. Highway 70.

The facility will be constructed in an existing 63,000-sq.-ft. (5,853-sq.-m.) building that will be expanded by 40,000 sq. ft. (3,716 sq. m.) The project creates 49 jobs that pay an average annual wage of \$47,000.

"This new distribution facility will allow us to be closer to serve many of our food-service customers and to enhance efficiency with all of our shipping locations," said David Stansfield, president of Pate Dawson. "We also have the capacity to expand in the future."

Malcolm "Mac" Sullivan, CEO of Pate Dawson, said, "We're excited about opening a new distribution center in Statesville. The community and the people we have met feel like home. Our view of business and relationships is generational, so we look forward to being part of this community and growing here for years to come."

The fifth-generation, family-owned company has a 126-year history in North Carolina. The company employs 390 workers at its headquarters in Goldsboro and at distribution centers in both Goldsboro and Greensboro. The firm also operates distribution facilities in Atlanta and serves more than 2,000 restaurants in nine Southeastern states.

The facility location at the intersection of I-77 and I-40 and the ready availability of a skilled work force were the most important site factors, according to the company. Mitchell Community College will team with Pate Dawson to implement an ongoing work-force development program.

Mike Smith of GSDC says that 2011 was a banner year for Statesville. "With the challenges that our economy has faced, it has made our proximity to two major Interstate highways and two major metro areas very good drivers of corporate facility project activity," he says.

"Our client visits were up significantly in 2011 over 2010. Having three announcements in December showed that there is a lot of interest in our community," he adds. "The food and beverage sector was very strong here in 2011. We have dual water sources here in Statesville, and that attracts a lot of activity from that industry."

**"J.C. Penney** added 225 jobs at their distribution center in Statesville last January," Smith says. "Metalworking is a growing sector here too. That takes a certain skill set that is found here in Iredell County. We have a very reliable work force. And with the coming changes to the Panama Canal, that will give us new opportunities as well. We have direct links to the ports in Wilmington, N.C., and Charleston, S.C."

Just a mile and a half from I-40, notes Smith, is the Statesville Regional Airport, which offers two sites of more than 80 acres (32 hectares) for industrial development. "The airport property provides great opportunities for clients in the aerospace sector," says Smith.

"Our downtown is in the midst of a \$7-million streetscape improvement program," he adds. "It shows the positive outlook that our community leaders have for Statesville. Last year was the 25th year for the GSDC, and just last month we moved into brand new space that will help us better market our area."

After another record-setting year, what's next for Iredell County? Smith says that "developing additional product for clients is important for us. We are expanding the Statesville Business Park, and we are working on a new site in Troutman just off Interstate 77."

Smith says that several hotels are looking at Exit 42 in Troutman because the site is close to a major sports complex that attracts a lot of visitors each year for various sporting events.

"We feel very good about industrial development moving forward," says Smith. "We are a consistent performer in Iredell County. Our local government has continued to be very business friendly, and our City Council leaders in Statesville know what it takes to get things done."





Gov. Bev Perdue, Charlotte Regional Partnership President and CEO Ronnie Bryant (far left) and North Carolina Secretary of Commerce J. Keith Crisco (far right) were among community leaders welcoming a new manufacturing investment in Statesville, N.C., from Providencia USA, a subsidiary of a Brazilian-based nonwovens company.

*Photo courtesy of Providencia USA and the Greater Statesville Development Corp.*

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## Charts & Maps

# 2011 TOP MICROPOLITANS BY NUMBER OF PROJECTS

Rank	Micropolitan	Count	Rank	Micropolitan	Count	Rank	Micropolitan	Count
1	Statesville/Mooresville, N.C.	28	T48	Alexander City, Ala.	3	T80	Forest City, N.C.	2
2	Wooster, Ohio	21	T48	Fort Payne, Ala.	3	T80	Henderson, N.C.	2
3	Cullman, Ala.	20	T48	Scottsboro, Ala.	3	T80	Lumberton, N.C.	2
4	Lexington/Thomasville, N.C.	18	T48	Talladega/Sylacauga, Ala.	3	T80	North Wilkesboro, N.C.	2
5	Shelby, N.C.	13	T48	Blytheville, Ark.	3	T80	Roanoke Rapids, N.C.	2
T6	Batavia, N.Y.	10	T48	Hope, Ark.	3	T80	Sanford, N.C.	2
T6	Findlay, Ohio	10	T48	West Helena, Ark.	3	T80	Wilson, N.C.	2
T8	Daphne/Fairhope/Foley, Ala.	9	T48	Americus, Ga.	3	T80	Minot, N.D.	2
T8	Morgan City, La.	9	T48	Calhoun, Ga.	3	T80	Ashland, Ohio	2
T8	Pottsville, Pa.	9	T48	Cordele, Ga.	3	T80	Cambridge, Ohio	2
11	Bellefontaine, Ohio	8	T48	Fitzgerald, Ga.	3	T80	Defiance, Ohio	2
12	Sidney, Ohio	7	T48	Jesup, Ga.	3	T80	East Liverpool/Salem, Ohio	2
T13	Danville, Ky.	6	T48	Statesboro, Ga.	3	T80	New Philadelphia/Dover, Ohio	2
T13	Somerset, Ky.	6	T48	Toccoa, Ga.	3	T80	Tiffin/Fostoria, Ohio	2
T13	Lincolnton, N.C.	6	T48	Twin Falls, Idaho	3	T80	Urbana, Ohio	2
T13	Ashtabula, Ohio	6	T48	Charleston/Mattoon, Ill.	3	T80	Wilmington, Ohio	2
T13	DuBois, Pa.	6	T48	Jacksonville, Ill.	3	T80	Zanesville, Ohio	2
T13	New Castle, Pa.	6	T48	Mount Vernon, Ill.	3	T80	Bartlesville, Okla.	2
T13	Columbia, Tenn.	6	T48	Sterling, Ill.	3	T80	Stillwater, Okla.	2
T13	Staunton/Waynesboro, Va.	6	T48	Bedford, Ind.	3	T80	Woodward, Okla.	2
T21	LaGrange, Ga.	5	T48	Warsaw, Ind.	3	T80	Gettysburg, Pa.	2
T21	Huntington, Ind.	5	T48	Fort Dodge, Iowa	3	T80	Lewistown, Pa.	2
T21	Richmond, Ind.	5	T48	Keokuk/Fort Madison, Iowa/Mo.	3	T80	Meadville, Pa.	2
T21	Glasgow, Ky.	5	T48	Storm Lake, Iowa	3	T80	Oil City, Pa.	2
T21	Hammond, La.	5	T48	Garden City, Kan.	3	T80	Sayre, Pa.	2
T21	New Iberia, La.	5	T48	Salina, Kan.	3	T80	Sunbury, Pa.	2
T21	Tupelo, Miss.	5	T48	Corbin, Ky.	3	T80	Warren, Pa.	2
T21	Chillicothe, Ohio	5	T48	Madisonville, Ky.	3	T80	Gaffney, S.C.	2
T21	Greenville, Ohio	5	T48	Mount Sterling, Ky.	3	T80	Georgetown, S.C.	2
T21	Chambersburg, Pa.	5	T48	Richmond, Ky.	3	T80	Hilton Head Island/Beaufort, S.C.	2
T21	Indiana, Pa.	5	T48	Crowley, La.	3	T80	Seneca, S.C.	2
T32	Ottawa/Streator, Ill.	4	T80	Minden, La.	2	T80	Union, S.C.	2
T32	Paducah, Ky./Ill.	4	T80	Opelousas/Eunice, La.	2	T80	Watertown, S.D.	2
T32	Mexico, Mo.	4	T80	Cadillac, Mich.	2	T80	Athens, Tenn.	2
T32	Sedalia, Mo.	4	T80	Midland, Mich.	2	T80	Crossville, Tenn.	2
T32	Amsterdam, N.Y.	4	T80	Traverse City, Mich.	2	T80	Humboldt, Tenn.	2
T32	Jamestown/Dunkirk/Fredonia, N.Y.	4	T80	Austin, Minn.	2	T80	McMinnville, Tenn.	2
T32	Kinston, N.C.	4	T80	Grenada, Miss.	2	T80	Tullahoma, Tenn.	2
T32	Mount Airy, N.C.	4	T80	Natchez, Miss./La.	2	T80	Alice, Texas	2
T32	Salisbury, N.C.	4	T80	Farmington, Mo.	2	T80	Big Spring, Texas	2
T32	Fremont, Ohio	4	T80	Columbus, Neb.	2	T80	Brenham, Texas	2
T32	Norwalk, Ohio	4	T80	Grand Island, Neb.	2	T80	Dumas, Texas	2
T32	Bennettsville, S.C.	4	T80	Gardnerville Ranchos, Nev.	2	T80	Nacogdoches, Texas	2
T32	Orangeburg, S.C.	4	T80	Gloversville, N.Y.	2	T80	Moses Lake, Wash.	2
T32	Dyersburg, Tenn.	4	T80	Oneonta, N.Y.	2	T80	Clarksburg, W. Va.	2
T32	Lewisburg, Tenn.	4	T80	Plattsburgh, N.Y.	2	T80	Manitowoc, Wis.	2
T32	Martinsville, Va.	4	T80	Watertown/Fort Drum, N.Y.	2	T80	Marinette, Wis./Mich.	2
T48	Albertville, Ala.	3	T80	Dunn, N.C.	2			

Source: Conway Data, Inc.'s New Plant Database

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Source: Conway Data, Inc.'s New Plant Database

## Comeback? Cullman Never Left



REHAU Inc. had a \$4-million expansion and created 116 new jobs in 2011 in Cullman, Ala.

**T**he winds from three April 27, 2011, tornadoes that ravaged Cullman County, Ala., and downtown Cullman had barely subsided when a collaborative recovery effort began that has marked one of the most remarkable restoration programs in the history of the community, say officials at the Cullman Economic Development Agency. Meanwhile, the company projects have kept coming too, boosting the micropolitan area to No. 3 in the nation.



Director Peggy Smith says the progress that has been made in Cullman is a tribute to the resiliency of the people. Citizens, churches, volunteers, business and industry stepped forward immediately to help. Hundreds of people and companies ignored their own personal tragedies to assist others. Many Cullman manufacturing and distribution companies provided manpower, materials and money to speed the recovery.


A National Guard soldier dispatched to Cullman told The Cullman Times that he had been overwhelmed by the community folks asking what they could do to help him.

"There were countless examples of people helping people," Smith says, "but I was extremely proud of the way our industry responded to a need in this community. The devastation validated that a true partnership exists between industry and the Cullman community."

— Adam Bruns



Topre America's facility which recently made an announcement of a \$109-million, 250-job expansion.



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